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Letter dated 22 December 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Spain and the United Kingdom, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, have the honour to transmit herewith a summary note of the meeting held on 14 September 2016 on women and peace and security in Mali (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Román **Oyarzun**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 22 December 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

Summary of the follow-up meeting on Mali, 14 September 2016

The meeting was attended by members of the Security Council and representatives of the United Nations Secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes. The main briefers were the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mahamat Saleh Annadif, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Koen Davidse, and the country representative of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in Mali, accompanied by senior mission staff and heads of United Nations agencies.

MINUSMA noted that women continued to be largely absent from the implementation mechanisms of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, the sole exception being the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There was only one woman among the 62 Malian members of the Agreement Monitoring Committee and its subcommittees, which were made up of representatives of the signatory parties. Women's representation among the international mediation members of the Monitoring Committee was also very low. More progress had been made by the Commission, which had begun its work and included six women among its 24 members. The number of women in Government had slightly increased in the most recent reshuffling of the cabinet.

In meetings with the Government of Mali, MINUSMA continued to advocate for a 30 per cent quota for women in decision-making bodies. It was hoped that a decree on the gender promotion law issued at the end of 2015 would be adopted in time to have an effect on the local elections in November 2016.

As part of the implementation of the national action plan, women's civil society organizations continued to push for 30 per cent representation in all relevant institutions and the earmarking of 15 per cent of all post-conflict funding towards gender equality. Several donors have made recent significant contributions towards the implementation of the plan, and MINUSMA and UN-Women have established a coordination group for training on human rights and gender for Malian forces, involving several international actors. There is a need to continue to recognize women's roles and agency in disarmament and demobilization and in the prevention of conflict and violent extremism.

In response to questions from Security Council members, participants from Bamako and New York added the following points:

- **Mission capacity.** MINUSMA currently has five staff members working on conflict-related sexual violence, but this capacity is insufficient to fully address all aspects of the issue, including liaising with armed groups, supporting the Government and providing legal support to the Malian military.

Three of the seven positions in the gender unit are vacant; these positions need to be filled to ensure that gender mainstreaming is implemented and institutionalized within the Mission.

- **Gender balance within the Mission.** MINUSMA has one of the lowest rates of gender balance among peacekeeping missions. There is a need to redouble advocacy efforts in negotiations with troop- and police-contributing countries and to prioritize women for senior posts within MINUSMA, as gender balance declined both in the military and the civilian components.

- **Women's leadership within the Mission.** Participants in the meeting welcomed the fact that the Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award was awarded to Major Aichatou Ousmane Issaka (Niger) at the Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial event, held in London in September 2016. The award recognizes Major Issaka's efforts in promoting the principles of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and in reaching out to women in the local community in Mali. In addition, a woman will be appointed head of the MINUSMA field office in Mopti.

- **Conflict-related sexual violence.** Following the visit of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, a joint communiqué to be issued with the Government is being negotiated. The non-State armed groups that are part of the Platform coalition also issued a unilateral communiqué on conflict-related sexual violence.

The Secretariat recommended that the Informal Expert Group continue to keep Mali on the agenda and that it consider sending a letter to Malian counterparts to encourage women's representation in key decision-making institutions created with a view to implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, and to encourage the fight against impunity for conflict-related sexual violence. Furthermore, the Security Council should ensure that the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities have the capacity and expertise to address gender issues and gross violations of women's rights. The Co-Chairs thanked MINUSMA for sharing detailed information on developments in the past six months and stated that they were encouraged to hear about the Mission's dedication to gender equality and to the women and peace and security agenda.